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Cloak and Dagger

Allen Dulles, former director of the Central Intelligence Agency, claims Americans talk too much about matters that ought to be secret. It is not hard to believe. Never before, for instance, have Americans heard or talked so much about the Central Intelligence Agency, and if there's anything in the country that ought to be secret, that's it.

Americans have a hard time understanding that. They are guided by the principle that the Government's business is the public's business, and where secrecy is involved there is going to be hanky-panky, too: the way to avoid hanky-panky is to conduct the public business in the public spotlight. It's a fine argument—the only one—when the business is money or contracts or housing or awards for sewers or architectural designs. When the security of the country is at stake, however, all of us must be prepared to sacrifice some carefully-defined part of our right to know in order that the enemy won't know, either.

There can be no doubt that the enemy is trying to find out, right now. Mr. Dulles tells us that "in the Soviet Union, we are faced with an antagonist that has raised the art of espionage to unprecedented height, while developing the collateral techniques of subversion, deception and penetration into a formidable political instrument of attack. No other country has ever before attempted espionage on such a scale." Obviously, the only way to meet Soviet espionage is to have an intelligence operation of our own. And the only way it can work is in secret. Since the Cuban affair began the CIA has had entirely too much publicity, and it is time for it to crawl back into its hideout and go about its shadowy business. It still will have to go to Congress for money, and to the President for authority and for policy: not least among the many things wrong with the Bay of Pigs misadventure was the CIA's improper policy-making role. The less heard about the CIA in public, the better.